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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN

Fourteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 276th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 27 January 1995, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. CORTI

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

WAYS AND MEANS OF EXPEDITING THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE (continued)

1. Ms. HEYZER (Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)), drawing attention to the document entitled "Towards a Women's Development Agenda for the 21st Century", said that it was important for the international women's movement to determine what forms future development should take. The agenda was not just for women; it was a vision by women for the future of humanity. It identified five areas upon which efforts should be concentrated: economic restructuring that empowered women, creating sustainable livelihoods, building stable lives and healthy communities, peace building and conflict resolution, and ethical governance and respect for civil society.

2. There was much common ground between the women's development agenda and the issues dealt with by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; indeed, the agenda could be seen as a vehicle for the operationalization of the Committee's principles. Many of the articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women dealt with issues on which UNIFEM had been working for 20 years.

3. In preparing for the Fourth World Conference on Women, UNIFEM and the Committee must examine ways of working together. UNIFEM was committed to playing a greater role in lobbying for greater support for the Committee and in disseminating the Committee's findings, and it was willing to set up task forces on the national level. She would welcome guidance from the Committee as to how to go about such a task.

4. Ms. AOUIJ said that it would be useful if, when examining a report from a State party, the Committee could have information from UNIFEM regarding the results of its cooperation with that State or with relevant non-governmental organizations. She also suggested that UNIFEM and the Committee should agree on a theme for a joint workshop to be held during the Fourth World Conference on Women.

5. Ms. ABAKA said that if it had more resources UNIFEM could do even more than it did at present. The Committee should give serious consideration to what could be done to help UNIFEM attain the same status as the United Nations Children's Fund, so that it could implement its programmes more effectively. In that connection, she expressed the hope that UNIFEM would be able to assist in financing the translation of the Convention into the numerous local languages at the national level.

6. Ms. OUEDRAOGO agreed that the translation of the Convention into local languages was very important.

7. Ms. KHAN said that although more than 140 countries had ratified the Convention, Governments of developing countries often failed to fulfil their substantive obligations under the Convention, and remained indifferent to the need to disseminate information about the Convention to the public. As a

result, even highly educated women were often unaware of its existence. It was important to raise awareness among women's groups by organizing special workshops in towns and in more remote areas. UNIFEM could also help to mobilize public opinion, and to sensitize policy makers and Governments by making the latter aware of the responsibilities they had assumed under the Convention.

8. Ms. JAVATE DE DIOS said that, because of its international network of development programmes, UNIFEM would be the perfect partner in developing a systematic lobbying strategy on the regional and national levels for strengthening the mandate of CEDAW. Furthermore, UNIFEM could work closely with CEDAW on the follow-up to its recommendations made on the reports of States parties, and it could support the initiative for the draft optional protocol to the Convention. Another very important area for collaboration was the research and further refinement of an alternative, sustainable, human-centred and gender-sensitive development paradigm.

9. Ms. ESTRADA CASTILLO said that, in Latin America and the Caribbean, in the Andes subregion in particular, UNIFEM could allow CEDAW to use its infrastructure to inter alia organize events designed to raise women's awareness of their rights under the Convention and to provide training to legislators, judges, and non-governmental organizations.

10. Ms. BARE said that UNIFEM could assist national mechanisms to conduct seminars and workshops on the Convention. Not all countries of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) had ratified the Convention, and such workshops could prove very useful in getting more States to accede to it.

11. Ms. BUSTELO GARCIA DEL REAL said that the activities proposed thus far would cost money, and that UNIFEM was always short of resources. A national committee for UNIFEM was being established in Spain for the purpose of raising public awareness of UNIFEM and raising funds for it and for the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations would provide a good opportunity for similar action in other countries of the European region.

12. Ms. SCHÖPP-SCHILLING said that the German National Committee for UNIFEM had had difficulty obtaining funds from the Government. In the current financial climate, UNIFEM and CEDAW might enhance their prospects of raising funds from industrialized countries if they joined forces.

13. The CHAIRPERSON said that UNIFEM had played a major role at the World Conference on Human Rights in helping to make the Convention known. The long-term prospects for cooperation between UNIFEM and CEDAW were highly encouraging.

14. Ms. HEYZER (Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said that although it had been in existence for 20 years, UNIFEM still was not taken seriously. Member States must fulfil their commitment to provide resources so that UNIFEM could carry out its mandate, which was to empower women. She would keep the Committee informed of concrete ways to make the partnership between CEDAW and UNIFEM work.

15. The meeting was suspended at 4.05 p.m. and resumed at 4.20 p.m.

OTHER MATTERS

16. Ms. BUSTELO GARCIA DEL REAL pointed out that it was not clear from the summary records of the thirteenth session that General Recommendation No. 21 had, in fact, been adopted; they should be corrected.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.